

THE PATRIARCH ATHANASIUS
(1289-1293; 1303-1309)
AND THE CHURCH

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The following paper is substantially the same as that delivered at the Symposium on "Current Work in Medieval and Byzantine Studies," held at Dumbarton Oaks in May 1972.

INTRODUCTION

ATHANASIUS,¹ one of nine patriarchs during the long reign of the Emperor Andronicus II Palaeologus (1282–1328), headed the Orthodox Church at a turbulent time in Byzantine history. The Church, still not entirely recovered from the split over the Union of Lyons of 1274, was in the throes of another controversy, the schism between supporters of the rival Patriarchs Arsenius and Joseph which continued long after the deaths of these two men. The Empire's shrinking territory was being ravaged by the attacks of Turks and Catalans alike. In 1302 the Turks defeated the Byzantines at the battle of Baphaeus, only fifty miles from the walls of Constantinople. The Catalan Company, which Andronicus hired in 1303 as a mercenary force to fight against the Turks, waged a successful campaign in Anatolia but turned against the Byzantines when the Emperor was unable to pay them. After Michael IX, the son of Andronicus, instigated in 1305 the murder of their leader Roger de Flor, the Catalans ravaged Thrace and Macedonia before moving south into Frankish territory in central Greece. As refugees from the Catalan and Turkish attacks streamed into Constantinople, food supplies in the capital dwindled and a terrible famine began.² The grain shortage was worsened by the Emperor's "scorched-earth policy" of 1306, when he forbade Thracian peasants to sow grain so that Catalan marauders would not be able to reap the crops.³

Athanasius responded to this period of crisis by initiating welfare programs and a policy of social reform, which were among his greatest achievements as

¹ This paper developed out of the author's research on the Patriarch Athanasius in connection with the preparation of an edition of his correspondence with the Emperor Andronicus II based on the 14th cent. manuscript Vat. gr. 2219. The Greek text of 115 letters, with English translation and commentary, is being published by Dumbarton Oaks. In the footnotes to this article the numbering of letters follows the sequence of my edition; I also give the reference to V. Laurent's very important recent publication, *Les regestes des actes du Patriarcat de Constantinople*. Vol. I: *Les actes des Patriarches*, fasc. IV: *Les regestes de 1208 à 1309* (Paris, 1971), which includes summaries of all Athanasius' letters and homilies, and one *Novel*.

There are a number of articles on this controversial patriarch of the Palaeologan period. Still useful as general accounts of Athanasius' patriarchates are R. Guillard, "La correspondance inédite d'Athanaise, Patriarche de Constantinople (1289–1293; 1304–1310)," *Mélanges Charles Diehl*, I (Paris, 1930), 121–40, reprinted in *idem, Etudes Byzantines* (Paris, 1959), 53–79, and N. Bănescu, "Le Patriarche Athanase Ier et Andronic II Paléologue: Etat religieux, politique et social de l'Empire," *Académie Roumaine. Bulletin de la section historique*, 23 (1942), 28–56. For more detailed analysis of some of Athanasius' letters, see Angeliki Laiou, "The Provisioning of Constantinople during the Winter of 1306–1307," *Byzantion*, 37 (1967), 91–113, and *idem*, "A Byzantine Prince Latinized: Theodore Palaeologus, Marquis of Montferrat," *Byzantion*, 38 (1968), 386–410. The same author also has numerous references to Athanasius in her *Constantinople and the Latins: The Foreign Policy of Andronicus II, 1282–1328* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972).

All references to Byzantine historians are from the Bonn corpus.

² For a detailed account of the Byzantine Empire during the reign of Andronicus II, see now Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*.

³ Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 628; Athanasius, *Letter 67* (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1650). See also Laiou, "The Provisioning of Constantinople."

patriarch.⁴ In the tradition of John Chrysostom he attacked the gluttony, avarice, and corruption of the wealthy nobility and constantly sought to alleviate the sufferings of the poor and oppressed. He castigated the rich for enjoying a luxurious existence while their less fortunate brethren were freezing and starving in the streets,⁵ and also encouraged the nobles to contribute to a fund for the relief of refugees from Anatolia.⁶ The Patriarch himself set up "soup kitchens" on street corners, where he ladled out filling gruels of flour and oil, and fish and vegetable soups, and distributed shoes and clothing to the desperate victims of war.⁷ He also organized a commission to control grain supply and prices.⁸ At the urging of the Emperor Andronicus he set up a court of mediation to make judgments in cases of poor people who had been victimized by greedy officials.⁹ In 1305, at the time of the disastrous fire which ravaged an entire quarter of Constantinople, from the monastery of St. John the Forerunner in Petra to the Kynegos gate, he forced looters to return stolen goods to the rightful owners.¹⁰

Since such social concerns won Athanasius the overwhelming love and veneration of the people of Constantinople, one might well ask how it was that he came twice to be deposed from the patriarchal throne. Why was he such a controversial figure, who was twice raised to the patriarchate, and twice, in 1293 and 1309, was forced to resign? An examination of Athanasius' career leads to the conclusion that the undoing of this Patriarch was precisely that zeal for the Christian life which was eventually to win him sainthood; for it was his reforms in the ecclesiastical sphere that led to the irreconcilable alienation of many factions in the Byzantine Church, which he was attempting to purify.

⁴ For the tradition of social concern in the Byzantine Church, see D. J. Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare* (New Brunswick, N. J., 1968), esp. 67-87.

⁵ In one of his most vivid sermons (Vat. gr. 2219, fols. 166v-167v=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1632), the Patriarch used the device of castigating himself for sensual pleasures in order to attack the comfortable existence of the rich which was in such contrast to the misery of the poor: σήμερον τῶν πενήτων ἡμῶν ἀδελφῶν λιμῷ διαφειρομένων, τηκομένων τῇ δίψῃ, πηγυνυμένων τῷ κρύει, ὑπαίθρῳ προσπαλαιότων ταλαιπωρίᾳ τῇ ἔξ ἀέρων, ἐμοῦ τῇ φιλοσαρκίᾳ καὶ τῇ σπαστάλῃ προσκαθημένου, οὐκ ἄρτου μόνον ἐν πλησμονῇ, δλλά καὶ ἐδεσμάτων καὶ οίνου ἐμφορούμενου εἰς μέθην, καὶ περιθάλψει ἴματίων ποικίλων, καὶ στρωμνῇ ἀπαλῇ ὑπτιάζει καὶ φέγγειν, οὐ μόνον νυκτός δλλά καὶ ήμέρας, καὶ μηδαμᾶς αἰδουμένου τὸν Χριστοῦ ἀδελφὸν (ῷ πωρώσεως τῆς ἐμῆς!), τάς ἀσθενείας καὶ συμφοράς καμνόντων τοσούτων, ὡς καὶ ἐδάφει ψιλῷ κατακλίνεσθαι (166v-167r).

⁶ Athanasius, *Letter 22* (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1684), and unpublished letter, Vat. gr. 2219, fols. 182r-185r (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1757), where Athanasius suggests to the senate, ἡ μερισώμεθα κατὰ δύναμιν ἔκαστος ἐκ τῶν αἰχμαλώτων τινάς, ἡ ἔρανον ὑπὲρ τούτων δῶμεν εἰς δύναμιν (185r). For αἰχμάλωτος meaning "refugee," see Laurent, *Regestes*, 402, and P. Lemerle, *L'Emirat d'Aydin, Byzance et l'Occident* (Paris, 1957), 20 note 4.

⁷ *Theoctisti Vita Ath.*, 34-35; *Calotheti Vita Ath.*, 101 (see note 18 *infra*, for full citations); Athanasius, *Letter 78* (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1638); unpublished sermon of Athanasius, Vat. gr. 2219, fols. 166v-167v (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1632): ἐσκεψάμεθα λέβητας στῆσαι ἔξ ἐψήματος τοῦ τυχόντος, ἡ καὶ κολλύβων προνοήσασθαι τοῖς ἀθλίοις . . . ἔνθεν πένητας καὶ πλουσίους καὶ λαϊκούς καὶ μονάζοντας ἀξιῶ . . . συγκροτεῖν καὶ ἡμῖν ἀφ' ὧν ἔκαστος εὐπορεῖ πρός τοὺς λέβητας, ἔκ τε ἑλάσιν καὶ σίτου καὶ οίνου, ἵχθυος τε καὶ τυροῦ, καὶ δσπρίων καὶ παντοίας τροφῆς, καὶ τοῦ τυχόντος ὑποδήματος καὶ ἐδύματος (166v).

⁸ Cf. Athanasius, *Letters* 72-74, 93, 100, and 106 (=Laurent, *Regestes*, nos. 1649, 1642, 1653, 1652, 1727, and 1606).

⁹ Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 369-70, 583; Athanasius, *Letter 46* (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1693).

¹⁰ Athanasius, unpublished letter in Vat. gr. 2219, fols. 168r-169r (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1631), and Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 582.

As a patriarch who was twice forced to abdicate from the throne of Constantinople, Athanasius is in the company of such celebrated churchmen as John Chrysostom, Photius, and Arsenius. The comparison of Athanasius with the ecclesiastical and social reformer Chrysostom is most appropriate, for the Emperor Andronicus II used to liken the Patriarch to Chrysostom on account of his moral virtue,¹¹ and Athanasius himself drew parallels between his career and that of his fourth-century predecessor.¹² Chrysostom has been characterized by J. B. Bury as “an independent and austere man, who in his own habits carried asceticism to excess, and his ways were rough and uncourtly . . . his supreme interest lay not in controversial theology but in practical ethics. His aim was the moral reformation of the world.”¹³ This description could apply equally well to Athanasius, who tried to impose upon everyone the ascetic discipline which he had practiced as a monk and continued even as patriarch. The historian Pachymeres, who, as a church official, was personally affected by Athanasius’ reform program and must be viewed as a hostile witness, described the Patriarch as tougher than “beans which do not soften even in boiling water.”¹⁴ He also criticized the fanatic zeal of Athanasius’ disciples, who condemned people for buying new clothes, for possessing a cross made of silver or gold, or a handsome decorated knife, for using a white towel or taking a bath, even for going to a doctor or having friends!¹⁵ Throughout his letters and sermons the emphasis is on prayer, repentance, and a disciplined devotion to the spiritual life; it was imperative that every subject of the empire change his ways and lead a virtuous life, dedicated to God, if the Byzantines were not to be punished by divine wrath and overwhelmed by the Turks.¹⁶

Athanasius also resembles Chrysostom in that his writings stress reform rather than theology. Nowhere in his works is there any discussion of doctrine, no comment, for example, on the question of the Procession of the Holy Spirit which agitated so many Byzantines. Nor is there any hint in his writings that

¹¹ Cf. Gregoras, *Hist.*, I, 216: ἵσον τῷ Θειοτάτῳ τὴν ἀρετὴν Χρυσοστόμῳ προσέσεσιν ὅλαις τῆς γνώμης τοῦτον (i.e. Athanasius) ἀποφανόμενον.

¹² In *Letter 2* (=Laurent, *Regestes*, Appendix no. 2), Athanasius compares himself with Chrysostom, who was also deposed from the patriarchate; in *Letter 69* (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1614), Athanasius likens his archenemy, the Patriarch of Alexandria, to Theophilus, the Alexandrian patriarch who opposed Chrysostom; and in *Letter 111*, his first letter of resignation (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1557), Athanasius alludes to the title of John Chrysostom’s *Quod qui seipsum non laedit, nemo laedere possit* (*Patrologia Graeca*, 52, cols. 459–60), a letter written after his deposition from the patriarchal throne in 404 and exile to Cucusus. Athanasius’ similarity with Chrysostom has also been noted by John Meyendorff in his essay, “Spiritual Trends in Byzantium in the Late Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries,” in *Art et société à Byzance sous les Paléologues*, Bibliothèque de l’Institut hellénique d’études byzantines et post-byzantines de Venise, no. 4 (Venice, 1971), 60.

¹³ J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire*, I (New York, 1958), 138–39.

¹⁴ Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 519. Pachymeres held the ecclesiastical office of *protekdkos*; cf. *Hist.*, I, 11. He was also hostile to Athanasius because of the latter’s enmity with the Patriarch of Alexandria, who was a friend of the historian; cf. the unpublished letter from Pachymeres to Athanasius of Alexandria in Par. gr. 996, fols. 275r–276v.

¹⁵ Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 148–49.

¹⁶ Cf., for example, *Letter 8* (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1593): ἵνα οὖν μὴ ἐκτρίψῃ Θεὸς πανωλεθρίᾳ τὸ πᾶν, ὅσον εἰς ἡμετέρων ἦκει καὶ γνῶσιν καὶ δύναμιν, ἐπιμελώμεθα θεραπείας διὰ τὸν Κύριον; *Letter 13* (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1610): ἡνιάθημεν δὲ πῶς ὅλως ἴσχύουσι καθ’ ἡμῶν οἱ μισοῦντες ἡμᾶς, δι’ ἀλλο οὐδὲν ἢ δι’ ἀθέτησιν τῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ νόμων καὶ καταφρόνησιν, καὶ πλέον οὐδέν.

he was a precursor of Hesychasm, as he is called by Gregory Palamas,¹⁷ except that his devotion to a pure form of monasticism was characteristic of this movement. Athanasius' primary concern was not dogma or theory, but rather his compelling duty to eradicate the evils he saw in the world around him, especially the abuses prevalent in every segment of the Church, among bishops, clergy, and monks alike. Unfortunately, his excessive zeal provoked so much resentment that he was unable to retain leadership of the Church and carry out the reform program that was so desperately needed.

THE EARLY CAREER OF ATHANASIUS

The biography of this ascetic Patriarch is fairly well known, based on three types of sources: two *Lives* from the fourteenth century,¹⁸ the *Histories* of Pachymeres and Gregoras, and Athanasius' own correspondence. The events of his life prior to his elevation to the patriarchate in 1289 can be quickly summarized. Born in Adrianople around 1230 or 1235,¹⁹ he discovered his monastic vocation at an early age, and left home while still in his teens. After spending three years at the monastery of Espigmenou on Mt. Athos, where he was distinguished by his asceticism, he set off on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, including the desert monasteries of the Jordan region. Upon his return he visited a number of monastic communities on the Aegean coast of Asia Minor, and finally settled down at the monastery of St. Lazarus on Mt. Galesion, near Ephesus. Here he was ordained deacon and presbyter. Although Athanasius was later to order monks to remain in their monasteries, he himself moved frequently from one monastic community to another, apparently in the constant search for a spiritual atmosphere which would best suit his needs.

Around 1278 he left Galesion for Athos, but soon returned because of the persecution of the Athonite monks by the Patriarch John Bekkos for their opposition to the Union of Lyons. Then, growing restless again, he crossed back to Europe and went to the holy mountain of Ganos in Thrace. Here he founded a monastery, called Νέα Μονή, for the disciples who by now were flocking to his side, attracted by his reputation for piety and asceticism and his opposition to the Unionist policy of Bekkos.²⁰

¹⁷ Cf. G. Palamas, *Défense des saints hésychastes*, ed. and trans. J. Meyendorff (Louvain, 1959), 99 (= *Triad* I, 2, 12). As further proof that Athanasius was generally considered as a forerunner of the hesychast movement, it is significant that his two surviving biographies (see following note) were both written by Palamite monks.

¹⁸ The *Lives* are by Theoktistos the Studite (ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, "Zitija dvuh Vselenskih patriarhov XIV v., svv. Afanasija I i Isidora I," in *Zapiski istoriko-filol. fakul'teta Imperatorskogo S.-Peterburgskogo Universiteta*, 76 [1905], 1–51), and by Joseph Kalothetos (ed. Athanasios Pantokratorinos in Θρησκικά, 13 [1940], 56–107).

¹⁹ The approximate date of Athanasius' birth can be calculated as follows. According to the *Vita* of Theoktistos, ca. 1275, when Bekkos' persecutions began, Athanasius had spent three years at Espigmenou, made a trip to the Holy Land, paid extended visits to Latros and Auxentios, and had stayed 18 years on Mt. Galesion. Since he went to Athos as a teen-ager, he must have been born ca. 1230–1235. It follows that he would have been at least 75 when he died sometime after 1310; this tallies with his complaints in his letters about his old age; cf. *Letter* 57 (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1701): ἔγώ γάρ καὶ γήρας καὶ νόσων καὶ τὸ πλεῖον ἀπραγμούσην συλῶν; *Letter* 112 (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1666; PG, 142, col. 493B): καὶ γήρας καὶ ἀσθενείας ταλαιπωροῦντες

²⁰ *Theoictisti Vita Ath.*, 2–18; *Calotheti Vita Ath.*, 61–84.

Shortly after the death of Michael VIII in 1282, and the reversal in Byzantine religious policy with the accession of his son Andronicus to the imperial throne, Athanasius was introduced to the new Emperor. Andronicus was greatly impressed by Athanasius' saintliness and installed him in a monastery on the hill of Xerolophos so that he could see him frequently.²¹ Athanasius must have come to Constantinople by 1285, since he attended the Council of Blachernae in that year which condemned Bekkos.²²

ATHANASius AS PATRIARCH

The Council of Blachernae officially ended the conflict in Constantinople between supporters and opponents of Union; another controversy continued to trouble the Church, however, the struggle between Arsenites and Josephites.²³ The Arsenite faction venerated the memory of the Patriarch Arsenius (1255–1260 and 1261–1265), who had twice been deposed by Michael VIII for his opposition to the Palaeologan usurpation of the throne from the Lascards. The ranks of the Arsenites were composed mostly of monks and of people from Anatolia who were loyal to their former rulers in the Kingdom of Nicaea. Arsenius had excommunicated Michael VIII after the latter's blinding of the youthful John IV Lascaris in 1262, and he was subsequently deposed by a synod. Joseph, who ascended the patriarchal throne in 1266, lifted the excommunication of the Emperor and was therefore anathema to the Arsenites. Both Josephites and Arsenites opposed the Union of Lyons and the Unionist Patriarch John Bekkos (1275–1282), but when Andronicus II succeeded to the throne and repudiated the Union, it was natural that the pro-Palaeologan faction, that is, the Josephites, should regain control of the patriarchate. First Joseph himself, in failing health, returned to the patriarchal throne for a few months (December 1282–March 1283), and then upon his death he was succeeded by Gregory of Cyprus, who also opposed the Arsenites.

In 1289 the Arsenites were instrumental in bringing about the abdication of Gregory, but failed in their attempt to secure the election of one of their number to the patriarchal throne. Andronicus, still fairly new on the throne, could not accept the Arsenite ultimatum that the name of the Patriarch Joseph should be removed from the diptychs, especially since it was Joseph who had crowned him co-emperor in 1272. Andronicus therefore chose Athanasius as Gregory's successor, evidently hoping that this pious and simple monk would be acceptable to both sides. Athanasius, with some reluctance, was ordained patriarch on October 14, 1289.²⁴

As will be discussed later in greater detail, the new Patriarch proved to be unpopular with every element in the Church, from powerful bishops to humble monks, primarily because of his intransigent opposition to the Arsenites and

²¹ Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 107–8, 139; *Theoctisti Vita Ath.*, 21; Gregoras, *Hist.*, I, 191.

²² Calotheti *Vita Ath.*, 87.

²³ On the Arsenites, see V. Laurent, "Les grandes crises religieuses de Byzance. La fin du schisme arsénite," *Académie Roumaine, Bulletin de la Section historique*, 26, 2 (1945), 225–313.

²⁴ Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 139–47.

because of his efforts to introduce reforms and end corruption. Athanasius' primary supporter, the Emperor, was away on a tour of Anatolia from 1290 to 1293, and by the time he returned it was too late to check the rising tide of opposition to Athanasius. A coalition of bishops, clergy, and monks forced him to resign in October of 1293, four years after he ascended the patriarchal throne.²⁵ Bitterly resentful of his deposition, he retired to his monastery at Xerolophos, but only after taking steps to assure his eventual return to the patriarchate. His devious stratagem was to hide in St. Sophia a letter anathematizing those who made false accusations against him, including "the man who was misled by them," no doubt a reference to Andronicus himself.²⁶ The discovery of this document four years later in 1297 caused great anxiety for the pious Emperor, who feared nothing more than anathema. For he realized that Athanasius in retirement had no power to release him from anathema; he would have to be reinstated as patriarch in order to clear the Emperor's name.²⁷

The Emperor had also, however, to reckon with the Arsenites. In 1294 they had again been deprived of the patriarchate when John-Cosmas of Sozopolis was chosen to succeed Athanasius. When John abdicated in 1302, the Arsenites began once more to agitate about the patriarchate. Indeed, they had just about persuaded the Emperor that the schism would never be ended until they gained control of the Church, when Athanasius intervened to secure his own reinstatement. He predicted imminent disaster for the capital, and a subsequent mild earth tremor convinced the Emperor that a man so endowed with the gift of prophecy had to sit on the patriarchal throne.²⁸ So he repudiated his agreement with the Arsenites, and Athanasius emerged from retirement to become patriarch a second time in June 1303.²⁹ It is an interesting coincidence that in 403 it was a mild earthquake which persuaded the Empress Eudoxia to recall from exile the deposed Patriarch John Chrysostom.³⁰

During Athanasius' second patriarchate the tensions with bishops, clergy, and monks were revived. A number of Arsenite monks were expelled from the capital³¹ and most of the bishops were forced to leave Constantinople, but sufficient enemies remained to force his resignation for a second time in September 1309.³² The Emperor Andronicus was finally convinced that the only way to end the Arsenite schism was to remove the unyielding Patriarch, who refused to allow any compromise with the Arsenite faction. Indeed, a year after Athanasius' retirement, the forty-five-year schism between Arsenites and Josephites was healed. One of the provisions of the tome of union was that Athanasius was never again to be patriarch.³³ He spent the remaining

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 177–78. Athanasius, *Letters* 2, 111, and 115 (= Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1557; Appendix, nos. 2, 11).

²⁶ Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 169–73 (= Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1553).

²⁷ Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 249–56, 301.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 341–62.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, II, 383. For the date of accession, see V. Laurent, "La chronologie des patriarches de Constantinople de la première moitié du XIV^e siècle," *Revue des Etudes Byzantines*, 7 (1950), 145–55.

³⁰ Theodoret, *Hist. Eccl.*, V, 34 (PG, 82, cols. 1261D–63A).

³¹ Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 409.

³² Cf. Laurent, "La chronologie des patriarches," 148.

³³ Gregoras, *Hist.*, I, 261–62; Laurent, "La fin du schisme arsénite," 288–313.

years of his life in retirement at Xerolophos, in such obscurity that his death, sometime between 1310 and 1323,³⁴ went unremarked in the histories of the period.

THE OPPOSITION

I would like now to consider in greater detail the various elements in the Church which opposed Athanasius and twice forced his retirement from the patriarchate. Athanasius neatly summed up the list of his primary antagonists in a letter of 1304 or 1305, where he accused the enemies of the Church of tearing into five pieces the body of Christ as He was suspended on the Cross. The first tear was made by the supporters of Union with Rome, the second by Arsenites, the third and fourth by followers of the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch, and the fifth by the clergy of St. Sophia.³⁵

CATHOLICS AND UNIONISTS

During the reign of Michael VIII Athanasius had been persecuted for his opposition to the imperial pro-Union policy, and he never gave up his hatred of supporters of Union. By the time he became patriarch, however, pro-Unionists did not constitute much of a threat; leaders of the movement were either dead, imprisoned, or living in exile.³⁶ Still, proponents of Union with Rome continued their efforts even in exile or prison cells; one purpose of Andronicus' journey to Asia Minor in 1290–1293 was to hold discussions with Unionist leaders and try to reconcile them to his religious policy.³⁷ Foreign Catholic visitors to Constantinople also spread Unionist propaganda; for example, the Dominican Simon of Constantinople, who returned to Pera in 1299, addressed four dogmatic letters to Andronicus and court officials.³⁸ In

³⁴ The *terminus ante quem* for Athanasius' death can be placed in 1323 for the following reason. According to an oration on the translation of Athanasius' relics, a woman named Katenitzina was miraculously cured of an evil spirit by visiting the relics of Athanasius in the year that Brusa fell to the Turks, i.e., 1326; cf. Λόγος εἰς τὴν ἀνακομιδὴν τοῦ λειψάνου τοῦ ἐν ἀγίοις πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἀθανασίου πατριάρχου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, cod. Const. Chalc. mon. 64, fols. 195v–197r. Since Athanasius had been dead three years when his perfectly preserved remains were discovered and moved to the church of Christ the Savior, he must have died at least by 1323.

³⁵ Letter 69 (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1614). In this passage Athanasius compared the schismatics unfavorably with Arius, since the latter was accused of tearing only the tunic of Christ (see Theodoret, *Hist. Eccl.*, I, 3 [=PG, 82, col. 889C]), whereas the Arsenites, Unionists, and other schismatics were guilty of tearing the very flesh of Our Lord.

³⁶ Bekkos died in 1297; cf. V. Laurent, "La date de la mort de Jean Beccos," *Echos d'Orient*, 25 (1926), 316–19. Except for periodic exiles to Bithynia, George Metochites was imprisoned in the capital until his death at the end of the reign of Andronicus; cf. Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 27; I. Ševčenko, *Etudes sur la polémique entre Théodore Métochite et Nicéphore Chouannos* (Brussels, 1962), 130 and note 2, 134 and notes 5–6; R. J. Loenertz, "Théodore Métochite et son père," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 23 (1953), 184–94. Metochites' Unionist colleague Constantine Meliteniotes was also exiled to Bithynia; after the death of Bekkos he was transferred to prison in Constantinople, where he stayed until his death in 1307; cf. Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 102–3, 636; Ševčenko, *Etudes*, 134; Loenertz, "Théodore Métochite et son père," 189–90, 192.

³⁷ George Metochites, *De historia dogmatica, Sermo III* (ed. A. Mai, *Patrum Novae Bibliothecae*, X, 1 [Rome, 1905], 327–30); Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 76–77.

³⁸ The unpublished letters are to be found in Vat. gr. 1104, Vat. Barber. 405, and Sinait. 1706; cf. A. Dondaine, "Contra Graecos. Premiers écrits polémiques des Dominicains en Orient," *AFP*, 21 (1951), 405–6, and Laurent, *Regestes*, 415.

one of his letters Athanasius threatened to resign because certain people were pressuring him to celebrate the liturgy in accordance with Roman ritual.³⁹

The Patriarch acted vigorously to counteract Catholic influence. In 1305, for example, he was instrumental in the expulsion of the Franciscans who had founded a monastery in the capital.⁴⁰ His hatred of Genoese, Venetians, and Catalans was based not only on their economic exploitation and physical abuse of the Greeks, but on his fear that they would spread their beliefs among the Byzantine population.⁴¹ In a letter of 1303 or 1304 Athanasius asked the Emperor to make sure that the Catalan leader Roger de Flor was accompanied by members of the Orthodox faith when he took control of certain Aegean islands, for fear that he would force the inhabitants of these islands to submit to the Pope.⁴²

By the end of Athanasius' second patriarchate there were indeed grounds for his anxiety about the Unionist threat, as reasons of diplomacy forced Andronicus, heretofore a staunch supporter of Orthodoxy, to reconsider his religious policy. In 1311, two years after Athanasius' second abdication, the Emperor would be willing to offer Union with Rome as a condition for the marriage of a Byzantine prince to Catherine of Valois. And in the 1320's, as part of a general program of rapprochement with the West, he would undertake more serious negotiations with Pope John XXII toward the reunification of the Churches.⁴³

ARSENITES

The second group of people who, according to Athanasius, were guilty of tearing the very flesh of Christ were the Arsenites, to whom he almost always refers by the derisive epithet of Ζυλωταί. This name may be derived from the combination of the usual term for the Arsenites, Ζηλωταί (Zealots),⁴⁴ with the word ξύλον (wood), to denote their unyielding quality, or may be derived from the verb ξηλώνω, meaning "to rend" or "tear," and refer to their schismatic character.⁴⁵ As a protégé of the Emperor Andronicus Palaeologus, Athanasius naturally despised this faction, whose continued support of the Lascarids was manifested in the unsuccessful conspiracy of 1305 when a man

³⁹ Letter 105 (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1731): εἰ οὖν μηδὲ λειτουργεῖν ἡμᾶς ἀνέχονται ἄλλοι, εἰ μὴ καὶ τῷ Ρώμης δάξῃ καὶ ὡς ἐκείνῳ δοκεῖ, δέον ἡμᾶς λογιζόμεθα καθέλεσθαι οἴκοι τοῦ φροντίζειν τὰ ἔστων.

⁴⁰ Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 537-38; F. Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches*. IV: *Regesten von 1282-1341* (Munich-Berlin, 1960), 45. Athanasius' Letter 23 (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1621), in which he asks the bishops to meet with him to discuss the problem of the Latins who are spreading propaganda, may be an allusion to this incident.

⁴¹ For anti-Latin sentiment on the part of Athanasius, see *Letters* 8, 9, 15, 17, 23, 35, 46, 68, 69, 81, 93, 94 (=Laurent, *Regestes*, nos. 1593, 1594, 1611, 1612, 1621, 1630, 1693, 1624, 1614, 1636, 1652, 1608).

⁴² Athanasius, Letter 9 (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1594).

⁴³ Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 241, 315-29.

⁴⁴ Cf., for example, Γράμμα τῶν Ζηλωτῶν τὸ πρὸς βασιλέα, ed. Laurent from Par. gr. 1302, fol. Br-v, in his article "La fin du schisme arsénite," (note 23 *supra*), 286-87. Guillard failed to realize that Ζυλωταί and Arsenites were one and the same, and erroneously concluded that Athanasius neglected to mention them in his correspondence; cf. "La correspondance inédite d'Athanase," 133-34.

⁴⁵ The latter derivation was suggested to me by Professor N. Panayotakis of the University of Jannina, Greece.

named Drimys, who claimed to be descended from the Lascarids, plotted the overthrow of the Palaeologan dynasty.⁴⁶

The Arsenites knew Athanasius would never compromise and agree to any of the terms upon which they insisted as conditions for their reconciliation with the Orthodox Church. Therefore, they were always working to secure his deposition so that the patriarchal throne might be occupied either by a member of their faction or by a churchman at least sympathetic to their cause. It has indeed been suggested that the Arsenite party formed a rallying point for opposition to the unpopular policies of Athanasius and that a number of bishops allied themselves with the Arsenite cause primarily as a protest against the Patriarch.⁴⁷

BISHOPS

This brings us to the bishops, who were constantly feuding with Athanasius. In his famous letter he accused the Patriarchs Athanasius of Alexandria and Cyril of Antioch, and their supporters, of being responsible for two more of the schisms in the Church. Like many other displaced bishops, these two men had taken up permanent residence in the relative safety and comfort of the Byzantine capital, where, according to Athanasius, they were attempting to usurp some of his prerogatives.⁴⁸ Athanasius never recognized Cyril's elevation to the patriarchate of Antioch, and almost always referred to him contemptuously as bishop of Tyre.⁴⁹ The Patriarch of Alexandria, on the other hand, along with half the other bishops, refused to recognize the second accession of Athanasius to the throne in 1303. In 1304 the Emperor persuaded almost all the dissident prelates to reconcile themselves to Athanasius' reinstatement. The Patriarch of Alexandria, however, continued to withhold recognition of Athanasius until he was expelled from the capital in 1305.⁵⁰ It is no coincidence that Athanasius' principal enemies were the representatives of the traditional rival sees of Constantinople. As Chrysostom had fallen victim to the machinations of the Patriarch Theophilus of Alexandria in the early fifth century, so Athanasius had to defend himself against the intrigues of an Egyptian rival who was agitating for his deposition.⁵¹

⁴⁶ On the Drimys conspiracy, see Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 592–93, and Athanasius, *Letters* 81 and 103 (=Laurent, *Regestes*, nos. 1636 and 1637).

⁴⁷ Laurent, "La fin du schisme arsénite," 242.

⁴⁸ Cf. Athanasius, *Letter* 69 (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1614): τῶν λίαν ἀδικωτάτων δοκῶ, τὸ ἑκάστην τῶν πολέων τοῖς τῶν 'Ρωμαίων σκήπτροις ὑποτελῆ, μὴ ἐπ' ἀδείας ἔχειν ἀλλης «ποιμένα ἐν τῇ μὴ ὑποκειμένῃ χειροτονεῖν» (can. Apost. 35), ἡ τινὸς κατεξουσιάλειν, ἡ καὶ τὸ τοῦ ταύτης ποιμένος σιωπᾶν ὄνομα, ἐν δὲ τῇ βασιλίδι κατὰ πολὺ πράττεσθαι... εὐρήσω καὶ γάρ, εἰ ζητήσω, τοὺς βουλομένους ἐντὸς τῆς μεγαλοπόλεως, εἰδήσεως ἄνευ, οὐχ Ἱερεῖς μόνον χειροτονήσαντας ἔχω τοῦ δέοντος, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπίσκοπον, ὡς ἔθος Ἀλεξανδρεῖσιν ἐν οἴκῳ Παύλου χωραύλου τινός...

⁴⁹ Cf. Athanasius, *Letter* 69: ἡ πρὸς τί ἀποβλέπει καὶ ἡ τοῦ Τύρου ἐν τῇ 'Οδηγητρίᾳ ἀναστροφή. On Cyril, see the article by V. Laurent, "Le patriarche d'Antioche Cyrille II (1287-c. 1308)," *Analecta Bollandiana*, 68 (1950) (=Mélanges P. Peeters, II), 310–17. Guillard failed to realize the identity of the Bishop of Tyre and the Patriarch of Antioch; cf. "La correspondance inédite d'Athanase," 134.

⁵⁰ Cf. Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 409.

⁵¹ Cf. *Letter* 69: τί δέ, εἰ ὅτε τῷ Τύρου δοκεῖ Ἱερεῖς ἀποπαύειν καὶ διακόνους, ἡ τῷ Ἀλεξανδρείας δέχεσθαι οὓς ἔθειοι καταλόγω δρθιδοξούντων, καὶ ἀποβάλλεσθαι ἀλλούς, καὶ συνόδου καὶ πατριάρχου τῶν ἀδειασθαι τοῦ μὴ κρίνεσθαι ὑπ' αὐτοῦ, αὐτὸν δὲ τὰ ἡμέτερα ταλαντεύειν ἐν ἔξουσίᾳ, ὡς ἀλλον

The hostility of the Patriarchs of Antioch and Alexandria toward Athanasius was shared by the majority of bishops, who were variously motivated in their opposition to the Patriarch. Their most common complaint, however, was against his rigorous stand on the question of episcopal residence. A refrain found throughout Athanasius' correspondence with the Emperor is his insistence that bishops should not reside in Constantinople, but either return to their sees or, if that were impossible, to a nearby diocese.⁵²

Many of the bishops had good reason for settling permanently in the capital. Some, like the Patriarchs of Syrian Antioch and Alexandria and the Metropolitans of Ankara, Pisidian Antioch, and Crete, came from areas which had long been under Muslim or Latin domination. Others came from cities which had recently fallen to the rising power of the Ottomans or other Turkish emirates, or were in serious danger of conquest. The first decade of the fourteenth century saw the loss to the Byzantine Empire of a number of major cities on the western coast of Anatolia; Pergamum, for example, fell in 1303, Ephesus in 1304.⁵³ Under Turkish occupation churches were turned into mosques, ecclesiastical property and revenues were confiscated and handed over to Muslim *evkaf* (or pious foundations), so that the local church was deprived of the income necessary to perform its traditional charitable services to the Christian population.⁵⁴ The number of faithful in Anatolia was drastically reduced, as Christians fled to Byzantine territory or were killed; those who remained behind often converted to Islam, either voluntarily or through force of necessity.⁵⁵ Turkish rulers were hostile to bishops, whom they viewed as imperial agents, and frequently prevented them from going to their assigned sees or expelled those who were already established in residence.⁵⁶

The hardships and dangers encountered are vividly described by Matthew, Metropolitan of Ephesus, who took up residence in his see in 1339. For some time he was forced to live in a small chapel on the outskirts of town and, when he fell ill, no doctor or medicines were available to relieve his sufferings. The great church of St. John had been converted to a fruit market and mosque,

Θεόφιλον; For a discussion of the traditional rivalry between the sees of Constantinople, Antioch, and Alexandria, see N. Baynes, "Alexandria and Constantinople: A Study in Ecclesiastical Diplomacy," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 12 (1926), 145–56.

⁵² See, for example, Athanasius, *Letters* 7, 23, 25, 28, 30–32, 69, and 79 (=Laurent, *Regestes*, nos. 1597, 1621, 1613, 1620, 1598–1600, 1614, and 1643).

⁵³ For the fall of Pergamum, see Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 318; H. Gelzer, *Pergamon unter Byzantinern und Osmanen* (Berlin, 1903), 91; and P. Wittek, *Das Fürstentum Mentesche* (Istanbul, 1934), 21. For Ephesus, cf. Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 589, and Lemerle, *L'Emirat d'Aydin, Byzance et l'Occident*, 20 and note 4.

⁵⁴ Speros Vryonis, Jr., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley, 1971), 311–23, 345–48, 351–55.

⁵⁵ Vryonis, *Decline of Medieval Hellenism*, 340–43, 351–402; Athanasius, *Letter* 110 (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1735): <Athanasius wishes that he were dead instead of seeing> ἐκδοθέν τὸ ὄρθόδοξον τοῖς ἀθέοις δι' ἐντολῶν καταπάτησιν, ὃς οὐ μόνον τινῶν ἔκοντι τὸ σέβας ἀρνησαμένων μοχθηρίας ὑπερβολῇ, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀκόντων συνελαθέντων εἰς τοῦτο τῇ ἀνυποστάτῳ ἀνάγκῃ.... A few, such as St. Nicetas the Young of Ankara, resisted conversion and became neo-martyrs. During the reign of Andronicus II Nicetas was tortured and burned to death in Nyssa for refusing to abjure Christianity; see H. Delehaye, "Le martyre de Saint Nicétas le Jeune," *Mélanges offerts à M. Gustave Schlumberger*, I (Paris, 1924), 205–11, and Vryonis, *op. cit.*, 361.

⁵⁶ Vryonis, *Decline of Medieval Hellenism*, 324–27, 344–45, 349–50.

and only six Christian priests remained in the entire diocese. At night the Turks threw stones at Matthew's house, and it is not surprising that after a few years he returned to Constantinople.⁵⁷

Still, there was some justification in Athanasius' position, since bishops were responsible for the spiritual welfare of their flocks, even at the risk of their lives. There were examples of courageous prelates who remained in their threatened cities not only to give words of encouragement to the beleaguered Greeks but even to lead the defense against the Turks. Thus the Bishops Niphon of Cyzicus and Theoleptus of Philadelphia personally directed the successful resistance of their cities against the besieging Turks in 1303 and 1304 respectively.⁵⁸ And some stalwart churchmen, such as Matthew of Ephesus, did brave the dangers of traveling through Turkish Anatolia in order to reach their sees. The congregations of cities under Muslim control strongly felt the need for spiritual leadership to help them resist the temptation to apostatize and bombarded the Patriarch with petitions for a bishop.⁵⁹ Gregory Palamas, who traveled through Bithynia in 1354 while a captive of the Ottomans, testified eloquently to the demoralization of the Christians under Turkish occupation.⁶⁰

Those bishops reluctant to remain in their sees would come to the capital on the pretext of attending the synod, and then would never leave, although both canon and civil law prohibited the prolonged absence of a bishop from his diocese.⁶¹ The emperors also encouraged to some extent the bishops' residence in Constantinople by granting them monasteries in the capital as headquarters and as a source of revenue. For example, Michael VIII gave the Patriarch of Alexandria the monastery of St. Michael at Anaploous, and later Andronicus II installed him in the monastery of Christ Euergetes. Cyril of Antioch was assigned the monastery of the Hodegitria.⁶²

Obviously, life in the capital was more pleasant and secure than in the provinces; it was also quite lucrative, as corruption was rife in the ranks of the bishops. They amassed considerable fortunes by accepting bribes from defendants who were to appear before the synodal court⁶³ and from candidates

⁵⁷ M. Treu, *Matthaios, Metropolit von Ephesos: Über sein Leben und seine Schriften* (Programm des Victoria-Gymnasiums: Potsdam, 1901), 51–58; summary of text in Vryonis, *Decline of Medieval Hellenism*, 343–48. I have not been able to consult the latest work on Matthew by Stavros J. Kourousses, entitled Μανουήλ Γαβαλᾶς ἦτοι Ματθαῖος μητροπολίτης Ἐφέσου (1271/2–1355/60). A'. Τὰ βιογραφικά (Athens, 1972). I am indebted to Professor Ihor Ševčenko for this reference.

⁵⁸ Niphon: Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 390; Theoleptus: see Nicephorus Choumnos, 'Ἐπιτάφιος εἰς τὸν μακάριον καὶ σγιώτατον μητροπολίτην Φιλαδελφείας Θεόληπτον, ed. J. F. Boissonade, in *Anecdota Graeca*, V (Paris, 1833), 231–34; Gregoras, *Hist.*, I, 221.

⁵⁹ Vryonis, *Decline of Medieval Hellenism*, 340–41.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 426–27; pertinent bibliography on 426 note 64.

⁶¹ See Athanasius, *Letter 31* (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1599); cf. also 14th canon of the Apostles, and 16th canon of 1st and 2nd synod (G. A. Rhalles and M. Potles, Σύνταγμα τῶν Σείων καὶ ιερῶν κανόνων, II [Athens, 1852], 18, 696–97); Justinian, *Novel 123*, chap. 9 (*Corpus Iuris Civilis*, III, eds. R. Schoell and G. Kroll [Berlin, 1928], 601–2), and *Basilics*, Book III, Title I, 15 (*Basilicorum Libri LX*, eds. H. I. Scheltema and N. van der Wal, Series A, 1 [Groningen, 1955], 88).

⁶² Monastery of St. Michael at Anaploous: Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 203. Christ Euergetes: Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 203; R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin*, I, 3 (Paris, 1953), 522–24; J. Pargoire, 'Le couvent de l'Evergétès,' *EO*, 9 (1906), 231. Hodegitria: Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 123; Περὶ Μεταθέσεων, ed. Laurent in 'Le patriarche d'Antioche Cyrille II,' 311.

⁶³ See Athanasius, *Letters* 16, 25, 28, 30, and 48 (=Laurent, *Regestes*, nos. 1678, 1613, 1620, 1598, and 1694).

for bishoprics and other ecclesiastical posts,⁶⁴ and by appropriating monastic funds.⁶⁵ The Metropolitan of Chalcedon, for example, is said to have completely exhausted the revenues of the Kosmidion monastery.⁶⁶ The Metropolitan of Sardis was sufficiently established in the capital to possess a vineyard, a yoke of oxen, a garden, and workshops.⁶⁷ The Metropolitan of Bitzyne could make loans for a profit of 800 *nomismata* annually.⁶⁸ Greed led one bishop, the Metropolitan of Cyzicus, to commit the sacrilege of stealing gold and silver from an icon of the Virgin and precious stones from a crown of the Archangel Michael.⁶⁹

Instead of attending services or taking part in special vigils and processions the bishops became preoccupied with material concerns, with parties and banquets, and with intrigues against the ascetic Patriarch who wanted them to leave the good life of Constantinople.⁷⁰ Reform *was* needed. Athanasius tried to correct the bishops' abuses by abolishing the institution of the permanent synod, the σύνοδος ἐνδημοῦσα, and reviving the custom of an annual synod.⁷¹ The bishops could come to Constantinople once a year for the synod, but were to leave the capital once the business of the synod was completed. He also appropriated for himself some of the monasteries previously assigned to displaced bishops.⁷²

By 1305 Athanasius had forced most of the bishops to leave the capital. If they could not return to their own dioceses, then they were to go to the see which they had been assigned κατ' ἐπίδοσιν, that is, as an additional source of revenue.⁷³ If possible, the prelates were granted supplementary sees near their original episcopal seats. Thus, the metropolitan of Crete was also *proedros* of Lacedaemonia, the metropolitan of Sardis received the see of Methymna on Lesbos, and the metropolitan of Apameia was assigned Nicomedia.⁷⁴

⁶⁴ Athanasius, *Letter* 48, and *Letter to Metropolitan of Apameia*, Vat. gr. 2219, fols. 128r–129v (=Laurent, *Regestes*, nos. 1694 and 1744).

⁶⁵ See, for example, Athanasius, *Letter* 83 (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1718).

⁶⁶ Athanasius, *Letter* 69 (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1614): τί γάρ; οὐκ ἔξιντλησε τὰ τοῦ Κοσμιδίου...;

⁶⁷ Athanasius, *Letter* 25 (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1613): τί δὲ ὁ Σάρδεων; οὐχὶ ἀμπελῶνα ἔχει ἐνταῦθα καὶ Λευγλαστείον καὶ κῆπον καὶ ἐργαστήρια, πρὸς τούτοις καὶ ἀδελφᾶτα;

⁶⁸ Athanasius, *Letter* 25 (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1613): ἀκούω γάρ ὡς ὁ Βιτζύνης εἰς ὀκτακόσια ἔξεδίου κατ' ἔτος τὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας.

⁶⁹ Nicephorus Choumnos, *Ἐλεγχος κατὰ τοῦ κακῶς τὰ πάντα πατριαρχεύσαντος Νίφωνος, ed. Boissonade, in *Anecdota Graeca*, V, 270–71.

⁷⁰ Cf., for example, Athanasius, *Letter* 25 (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1613): τί δὲ ἡ ἐνέργεια τούτων ἐνταῦθα, ὅτι κατέλιπον τὰς ἐκκλησίας αὐτῶν; οὐχὶ εἰς τὸ συνδόους ποιεῖν κατὰ τοῦ πατριαρχεύοντος καὶ καλέσματα μετ' ἀλλήλων...; See also Athanasius, *Letters* 16 and 48, and *Letter to Metropolitan of Apameia*, Vat. gr. 2219, fols. 128r–129v (=Laurent, *Regestes*, nos. 1678, 1694, and 1744).

⁷¹ Athanasius, *Letter* 31 (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1599); Gregoras, *Hist.*, I, 182; Gennadios of Heliopolis, *Ιστορία τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριαρχείου*, I (Athens, 1953), 364.

⁷² Athanasius took over the two Constantinopolitan monasteries assigned to the Patriarch of Alexandria after his departure in 1305, and also appropriated the monastery of the Hodegitria after the death of Cyril of Antioch; cf. Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 579–80.

⁷³ On the practice of granting additional sees to bishops, see S. Salaville, "Le titre ecclésiastique de πρόεδρος dans les documents byzantins," *EO*, 29 (1930), esp. 422–34.

⁷⁴ *Lacedaemonia*: cf. M. I. Manousakas, "Νικηφόρου Μοσχοπούλου ἐπιγράμματα σὲ χειρόγραφα τῆς βιβλιοθήκης του," *Ἐλληνικά*, 15 (1957), 240. *Methymna*: Athanasius, *Letter to Metropolitan of Crete* (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1627), ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 12 (1903), 217–19. *Nicomedia*: Athanasius, *Letter to Metropolitan of Apameia*, Vat. gr. 2219, fols. 127r–128r (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1743).

Athanasius' measures were temporarily successful in that the capital was emptied of bishops, and he held synods composed of abbots,⁷⁵ who were no doubt more sympathetic to his cause. By this policy, however, he lost the support of any bishops who might have originally favored him, and no one stood up in his defense in 1309, when he was forced out of the patriarchate for the second time.

CLERGY OF ST. SOPHIA

The fifth schism in the Church was attributed by Athanasius to a "band of fine priests," who, I believe, must be identified with the clergy of St. Sophia. They had a running feud with the Patriarch for several years and eventually went on strike, refusing to perform their services. By 1307 the Church was apparently in such financial straits that these clergy were not receiving any pay at all⁷⁶ and in desperation they applied to the Emperor for relief. The Emperor urged Athanasius to pay the clergy at least half their usual salary, that is, the pitiful sum of 6 or 8 *nomismata* annually, according to their rank.⁷⁷ The Patriarch argued that the ravages of Turks and Catalans had reduced the Church to such poverty that he had no money for salaries.⁷⁸ Athanasius was neither able to pay the various church officials, nor did he desire to do so because of their slack attendance at church services. Sometimes, even on important feast days, he was unable to find a deacon or official in charge of lamp-lighting to assist with the service!⁷⁹ The Patriarch complained that on the rare occasions when the clergy did come to church, and in street attire at that, their behavior was disgraceful. Instead of devoting themselves to prayer they could be seen chatting and laughing with each other, yawning, scratching themselves, and indulging in sensual daydreams. Their excuse for such negligent conduct was that they were not being paid.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 518 and 643.

⁷⁶ In 1304 the Emperor Andronicus was forced to adopt similar measures when the imperial treasury ran out of money to pay court officials and the army; cf. Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 209, 262, 290–94, and 397, and Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 187.

⁷⁷ Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 642. On the paucity of the sum of 6–8 *nomismata*, cf. the remarks of Vryonis, *Decline of Medieval Hellenism*, 312 note 133. Vryonis (*loc. cit.*) has identified οἱ δὲ τῆς ἐκκλησίας πρωτεύοντες (Pachymeres, *loc. cit.*), who were denied their pay, as metropolitans, but it is clear from some of Athanasius' unpublished letters that Pachymeres is referring to church officials at St. Sophia; cf., for example, Vat. gr. 2219, fols. 214v–215r (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1767), where the rebellious clerics are addressed as τῆς περιωνύμου μητρός τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν, τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου Σοφίας, φημί, θεοσεβέστατοι κληρικοί... (214v).

⁷⁸ Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 642; Athanasius, *Letter to the clergy of St. Sophia*, Vat. gr. 2219, fols. 216v–217r (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1769): ἐπεὶ διά τὰς ἐμάς ἀνομίας συνεκλείσθη τὸ πᾶν ἐν στενῷ, δυσχερής καὶ ὁ ρόγας ἔνεκεν πορισμός, οὐ λέγω τὸ πρὸς ἀξίαν, δλλὰ κανὸν πρὸς παραμυθίαν μικράν (216v).

⁷⁹ Athanasius, *Letter to the clergy of St. Sophia*, Vat. gr. 2219, fols. 219v–220r (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1771): ἐπισταμένων ἡμῶν διάκονον μὴ εὐρίσκεσθαι καὶ ἐπισήμοις πολλάκις ἡμέραις, μηδὲ τοῦ λυχνικοῦ αὐτοῦ τὸν κατάρβεντα... (220r).

⁸⁰ Athanasius, *Letter to the clergy of St. Sophia*, Vat. gr. 2219, fols. 220v–221v (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1772). As elsewhere, Athanasius reproves the clerics by including himself among the guilty: καὶ εἰ που καὶ συναχθῶμεν ἐν τῷ ναῷ λίτιν ῥαθύμως καὶ δκνηρῶς, κνῶμενοι καὶ χασμῶμενοι καὶ δμιλοῦντες τὰ μάταια ἐν καιρῷ τῷ τάχα τῆς προσευχῆς, καὶ οὕτω τὰ αἰσχῆ φημὶ τῶν ἔνδον ἡμῶν ἐμπαθῶν λογισμῶν (220v–221v). See also Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 643, and Vryonis, *Decline of Medieval Hellenism*, 334–37, for remarks on the deterioration of discipline among Byzantine clergy in the 14th century.

A lengthy stalemate ensued, during which the clergy "so to speak, seceded" (in the words of Pachymeres)⁸¹ and refused to perform their duties because they did not receive any pay, and Athanasius in turn refused to pay them because they did not perform their duties. Finally the Patriarch, with the support of the Emperor, offered the church officials two alternatives: 1) that the clerics should choose a trustworthy man to handle church revenues and that, after paying for the needs of the Church, he should then distribute any surplus to the clergy; or 2) that Athanasius should continue to control the purse strings and guarantee each official half-pay on condition, of course, that they performed their duties.⁸² The sensible clerics realized that under the first plan they ran the risk of receiving no pay at all, so limited were the resources of the Church, and they therefore agreed to the second proposal. Theophylact Libdikes, the archon of the churches, sent the Patriarch a letter promising that in return for half-pay he and most of his fellow clerics agreed to end their strike, and to come to church on Sundays and feast days for three services (matins, the liturgy, and vespers), clothed in proper vestments.⁸³

MONKS

Monks are not included in Athanasius' list of schismatics because they never officially seceded from the Church, but many of them actively opposed the Patriarch's reform program. Even though Athanasius had himself risen from the monastic ranks to become patriarch, he was unpopular with all but the most zealous of monks because of the rigid ascetic discipline he sought to impose on them. As in the case of the bishops, here too there was need for reform, but Athanasius went to such extremes that he only succeeded in making himself so unpopular that he was forced to resign and was unable to effect any permanent reforms in monastic discipline. The picture he presents of the degeneration of monastic life is perhaps exaggerated, but many of the abuses are those which had been criticized for centuries by would-be reformers.⁸⁴

Throughout the letters and sermons of Athanasius one finds passages attacking the lax discipline in monasteries. The monks are casual about attending services, sometimes even leaving in the course of them; they lean against the walls to rest or chat idly with a neighbor.⁸⁵ In the refectory some monks eat to excess; others, dissatisfied with the customary fare, try to

⁸¹ Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 643.

⁸² Athanasius, *Letter to the clergy of St. Sophia*, Vat. gr. 2219, fols. 219v–220r (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1771).

⁸³ Theophylact Libdikes, *Letter to Athanasius*, Vat. gr. 2219, fol. 219r–v; see Laurent, *Regestes*, 548.

⁸⁴ Cf., for example, descriptions of the degeneration of monastic life in Nicephorus Phocas' novel of 947 (K. E. Zachariä von Lingenthal, *Jus Graeco-Romanum*, III; *Novellae Constitutiones* [Leipzig, 1907], 292–96); in Eustathius of Thessalonica, *De emendanda vita monachica* (PG, 136, col. 825ff.); and in Theoleptus of Philadelphia (S. Salaville, "La vie monastique grecque au début du XIV^e siècle d'après un discours inédit de Théolepte de Philadelphie," *EtByz*, 2 [1944], 119–25). See also P. Charanis, "The Monastic Properties and the State in the Byzantine Empire," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 4 (1948), 55–58, 68, 85–87; and L. Oeconomos, *La vie religieuse dans l'empire byzantin au temps des Comnènes et Anges* (Paris, 1918), 142 ff.

⁸⁵ Athanasius, *Letter of regulations for monks*, Vat. gr. 2219, fols. 171r–174r (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1595). The abuses can be inferred from the list of prohibited actions.

procure special foods and wines for themselves.⁸⁶ The monks are not content to remain in their monasteries but are always seeking excuses to go to town or to another monastery and ride mules with unnecessarily elegant harnesses.⁸⁷ Worst of all, although monks supposedly entered the monastery to flee the cares of this world, they intrigue against their superiors and resort to bribery to secure appointments to monastic positions.⁸⁸ The abbots, who should set an example by their conduct, are guilty of misappropriation of church funds or of cohabitation with women.⁸⁹

It was these abuses that Athanasius set out to correct. He sent to all Byzantine monasteries a letter which was to be read on the fifteenth day of each month, reminding monks of the rules and regulations of monastic life.⁹⁰ He ordered that monks and nuns were to eat only once a day, in the evening, Monday through Friday. His motive was not only to impose rigorous discipline upon monks but to ration food at a time when Constantinople was in the grip of a severe famine, for he noted that all food saved by this new regime of one meal a day was to be given away to the poor.⁹¹ He checked the unrestrained wanderings of monks and nuns by ordering them to remain within the walls of their monasteries except in cases of absolute necessity. If they did have to travel abroad from the monastery, they were urged to walk, not ride, following the example of Athanasius himself, who never used horses or mules, even during his patriarchates.⁹² Abbots guilty of immoral conduct were promptly deposed or reported to the Emperor.⁹³

Athanasius also roused the anger of the monks by confiscating monastic property. During his first patriarchate his disciples went around to monasteries and appropriated monastic funds, presumably for distribution to the poor.⁹⁴ In 1303, soon after Athanasius regained the patriarchal throne, he took the extraordinary step of agreeing to an imperial proposal to confiscate monastic and church lands for distribution to feudal knights, as *pronoiai*. The

⁸⁶ Athanasius, *loc. cit.*; *Letter to Mt. Athos*, Vat. gr. 2219, fols. 235v–240v (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1590): ‘Αθανασίου προτος ἀβράχη τραπέζη καὶ ισχυρά, καὶ οἷνου τῇ χύσει ὑπέρ τὸ δέον. . . .’ (238r); *Letter to an abbot*, Vat. gr. 2219, fols. 176v–178v (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1596): μηδ' ὅπως πιάνης τὴν σάρκα, ὡς οἱ πολλοί, τροφῆ καὶ οἶνον ἔξιγλασγμένῳ (177r).

⁸⁷ Athanasius, *Letter 91* (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1724); cf. also Laurent, *Regestes*, nos. 1590, 1595, and 1640.

⁸⁸ *Monastic intrigue*: Athanasius, *Letter to Lavra on Athos*, Vat. gr. 2219, fols. 246v–249v (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1615): πλὴν ἀλλὰ πρὸ μικροῦ ἔξι ὑμῶν καὶ ὑπέρ ὑμῶν τῶν φιλτάτων οὐ μετρίως λελύπημαι, δεξάμενος γράμματα . . . διδόσκοντα ὡς μὴ ὀφελεῖν ἐπανάστασιν τέκνων πνευματικῶν πρὸς τὸν οἰκεῖον πατέρα τινῶν τῆς μονῆς (247v). *Bribery*: cf. Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1595, rule 10.

⁸⁹ *Misappropriation of funds*: Athanasius, *Letter 16* (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1678). *Cohabitation with women*: Athanasius, *Letter 77* (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1714). See also note 93 *infra*.

⁹⁰ Vat. gr. 2219, fols. 171r–174r (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1595).

⁹¹ Athanasius, *Letter to monks and nuns*, Vat. gr. 2219, fols. 93r–97r (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1651): . . . τὸ ἀπαξ τῇ πενθημέρῳ μονοσιτεῖσθαι διαταπτόμεθα . . . καὶ τὸ περιττεύον ἐκ τῆς μονοφαγίας τοῖς φθειρομένοις ἐκ τοῦ λιμοῦ ἀδελφοῖς τοῦ συμπεσόντος διὰ τὸς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν τοῖς ὅρθιοδόξοις οὐ τὴν τυχοῦσαν παραμυθίαν παρέξει (96r). See also Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 519, 618; *Theoctisti Vita Ath.*, 15–16, 27.

⁹² Gregoras, *Hist.*, I, 182–84; *Theoctisti Vita Ath.*, 5.

⁹³ In *Letter 16* (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1678) Athanasius reports to the Emperor the irregular financial conduct of the abbots of the monasteries of Akapniou (in Thessalonica) and Bera (in Thrace). In *Letter 77* (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1714) Athanasius records that he deposed the abbot of the patriarchal monastery near Apameia who was living with a woman.

⁹⁴ Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 149.

Emperor hoped that this measure would encourage these feudal landowners to fight more valiantly against the Turks, since they would be defending their own property. Athanasius dared not give his signed approval of this plan but sent Andronicus an olive branch, thereby indicating his tacit assent.⁹⁵ On another occasion the Patriarch was willing to sell church property for the relief of refugees from Asia Minor.⁹⁶ Usually Athanasius refused to compromise for the sake of expediency, as in the negotiations with the Arsenites, but in the above two instances he apparently felt that military and humanitarian considerations justified his release of church property.

Not all the monks in Constantinople were hostile to Athanasius. Disciples flocked to the monastery of Xerolophos where the Patriarch usually lived, and attempted to imitate the extraordinary asceticism of the master. It was on account of the devotion of these disciples and of the masses who had so benefited from Athanasius' welfare measures that he came to be worshipped as a saint after his death.⁹⁷ The faithful came to the monastery of Xerolophos to view his relics, and many were miraculously cured of physical and mental afflictions.⁹⁸ The letters of the former Patriarch were read in monasteries to inspire the zeal of monks for prayer and ascetic discipline.

Saintly people, however, are not always the best equipped for the leadership of such a complicated organization as the Greek Orthodox Church. The tragedy of this Patriarch was that his rigid policies toward the Arsenites and bishops led to a series of bitter confrontations, which twice forced his resignation from the patriarchate and prevented the continuation of his crusade for reform in the Church. As Gregoras commented, "it would have been worthwhile if such a rule and model <as that of Athanasius> had been maintained by his successors to the throne, as during his patriarchate. For if he had lasted longer as patriarch, the ways of monastic life would have been improved and permanently established. But as soon as he was out of the way, all diabolic diseases of evil broke out in the holy monasteries."⁹⁹ Perhaps, if Athanasius had more frequently resorted to the time-honored ecclesiastical principle of accommodation (*οἰκονομία*), especially in the dispute with the Arsenites, he might have stayed in power longer, accomplished more permanent reforms in the Byzantine Church, and been able to continue his admirable social welfare program for the poor.

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⁹⁵ Pachymeres, *Hist.*, II, 390; cf. Charanis, "The Monastic Properties and the State," 111, 116. The plan was never implemented because of the Turkish invasions; cf. the remarks of Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 118-20.

⁹⁶ Athanasius, *Letter 25* (=Laurent, *Regestes*, no. 1613).

⁹⁷ The memory of Athanasius is celebrated by the Greek Orthodox Church on the 28th of October; cf. K. Doukakes, Μέγας Συναξαριστής πάντων τῶν ἀγίων τῶν καθ' ἀπαντά τὸν μῆνα Ὁκτώβριον ἑορταζομένων (Athens, 1895), 455.

⁹⁸ The unpublished 14th-cent. oration, Λόγος εἰς τὴν ἀνακομιδὴν τοῦ λειψάνου τοῦ ἐν ἀγίοις πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἀθανασίου πατριάρχου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, cod. Const. Chalc. mon. 64, fols. 157r-199r, lists thirty-two persons who were cured or benefited in some way by their faith in the healing power of Athanasius' relics.

⁹⁹ Gregoras, *Hist.*, I, 184.